

PD – 9: Rappahannock Rapidan

Geographic characteristics

From the rugged Blue Ridge Mountains in the west to the rolling Piedmont in the east, the area is characterized by memorable scenic vistas, horse, cattle and dairy operations and row crop farms that provide feed for area livestock and produce for local and regional markets. Commonly known as hunt country, the region is host to many traditional horse-centered activities, including point-to-point events, fox hunts and polo matches. Orchards, wineries, forests and rural and suburban residential developments complete the land use types that make up this district.

Although essentially rural with an agrarian economy, the Rappahannock-Rapidan region has begun to experience many of the pressures typical of areas adjacent to the urban crescent. Surrounded by high growth rate areas to the north, south and east, the region's potential for development is the subject of scrutiny by builders and entrepreneurs. Telecommuters and people who are willing to commute a considerable distance to employment opportunities in Northern Virginia, Charlottesville and the Richmond area add to the pressure for increased development.

As local governments evaluate both the positive and negative aspects of development, they must identify and implement effective strategies that will allow them to manage inevitable growth while protecting regional resources. Some landowners, interested in maintaining the pastoral quality of the region, have voluntarily committed all or part of their property to conservation/open space easements. Approximately 126,406 acres in this area are in conservation easements held, for the most part, by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. Fauquier County landowners have protected more than 70,991 acres through conservation easements, with another 20,366 acres in Orange and 23,009 in Rappahannock counties. Another 12,040 acres are covered by easements in both Madison and Culpeper counties. In addition, many properties are owned and managed by land preservation trusts or foundations.

Most federal and state-owned open space is located in the western part of the district. Federal properties, specifically Shenandoah National Park and the section of the Appalachian Trail that passes through the area, make up about 66,000 acres of open space. State-owned properties include Sky Meadows State Park, Whitney State Forest and Thompson, Rapidan and Chester Phelps wildlife management areas. These combine to add another 21,500 acres to the public open space in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission.

Demographics

The Rappahannock-Rapidan Region covers an area of about 1,993 square miles and is home to more than 158,442 people. The population is estimated to grow to 183,900 by 2020. The region is made up of Culpeper, Fauquier, Rappahannock, Madison and Orange counties and the towns of Orange, Remington, Warrenton, Culpeper, Madison and Gordonsville. The area experienced an increase in population of 17.6% between 2000 and 2005, following a 15.6% increase from 1990 to 2000. Orange and Culpeper counties

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absorbed the greater part of that earlier increase with growth rates of 20.8% and 23.3%, respectively until 2000. More recently, Culpeper and Fauquier counties have taken the lead with 24.1% and 17.9% respective growth rates from 2000 to 2005—among the fastest growing counties in the state. Orange County is not far behind, with a growth rate of 16.9% over the same period. The largest towns in the region based on 2005 estimates are Culpeper (12,047), Warrenton (8635) and Orange (4429).

Demand/survey findings

Based on the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* and the facilities inventory, there is a significant shortage of soccer and baseball fields, basketball courts, water access sites, camping sites (tent and developed), public areas for sunbathing or swimming, hunting areas, places to ride off-highway vehicles (OHV), and sites that provide nature study programs.

Based on input from public meetings, there is more need for transportation alternatives, specifically trails for walking, hiking, bicycling and horseback riding. As is the case throughout the Commonwealth, walking for pleasure is the most popular recreational pastime in the area. If developed with multiple uses in mind, a comprehensive trail system could link small communities and specific destinations, thus providing exercise options and transportation alternatives. Limited safe cycling opportunities might be expanded through accommodation within a well-developed trail system.

Citizens also expressed interest in more canoeing and kayaking opportunities, and more water sports and waterfront development in general.

Outdoor Recreation

The following are general recommendations for outdoor recreation:

- Due to the increase in cultural and ethnic diversity in the Commonwealth, consideration should be given to making signs, literature and audio displays available in other languages. To better serve Latino and Spanish speaking cultural groups, it is important to establish trusting relationships; hire bilingual staff; advertise in the Spanish media; host Latino-themed events; create programs with the community, not for them, and invite, involve and include Hispanics in all aspects of service delivery. Similar strategies are effective for other cultural groups.
- State and regional agencies should place a high priority on providing recreation opportunities to the Commonwealth's urban population in "close-to home" settings to allow for better access and to avoid overuse of facilities planned for rural populations.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A

dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.

- Activity user groups along with local parks and recreation departments should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others to minimize user conflicts and increase economic and natural resource sustainability.
- Local, state and federal government should provide the appropriate number and venue of opportunities for the Commonwealth's population to enjoy and access outdoor environments.
- State and local DCR and local parks and recreation departments should provide opportunities to learn responsible use of public lands through the teaching of *Leave No Trace* and *Tread Lightly!* skills.
- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should promote management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.

Land Conservation

The land conservation maps for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands split by state and federal management agencies
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms. (See Chapter 3, Land Conservation).

Land Trusts Operating in the PDC

Land Trusts operating in the region include the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Friends of the Rappahannock, Piedmont Environmental Council, Potomac Conservancy, and the Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy.

General recommendation for land conservation include:

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open-space protection strategies presented in Chapter 3, Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land-use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.

Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.

Green Infrastructure Recommendations

The Conservation Fund defines Green Infrastructure as our Nation's natural life support system - an interconnected network of protected land and water that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources and contributes to the health and quality of life for America's communities and people. The following are regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning presented in Chapter 4.

- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through appropriate use of planning tools.
- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green-infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.
- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning, including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green-infrastructure initiatives should be identified and sought.

Programs

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation. The program areas include: Trails and Greenways, Blueways and Water Access, Historic and Landscape Resources, Scenic

Resources, Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways, Scenic Rivers, Watersheds and Environmental and Land Stewardship Education.

Trails & Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.
- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.

Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. The Appalachian Trail is an existing trunkline trail in this region.

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- 1 The **Appalachian Trail** is an existing National Scenic Trail. Because of this special designation, localities that host the Appalachian Trail should be cognizant of protecting viewsheds from existing overlooks and other scenic values of the corridor. For more than 75 years the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its member clubs have worked voluntarily with federal, state and local governments, as well as numerous individual landowners, to solve problems associated with the acquisition, development, administration, management and maintenance of the trail. Now trail managers worry about fewer bird species, booming populations of pests, neglected trail maintenance and soil erosion, smog, and creeping suburbs. The National Park Service and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy are working to turn the trail into a “mega-transect,” an outdoor lab where scientists will gather data on human impacts to the trail. Changes in land uses in areas adjacent to the **Appalachian National Scenic Trail** must be carefully considered to assure the protection of this valuable resource.

Other trail/greenway proposals for this region include:

- 2 The development of a **Rappahannock River Trail**, linking the Tidewater area to the **Appalachian Trail**. Potential exists for the development of a greenway/hiking/water trail system along the **Rappahannock River** to provide a connection from the Chesapeake Bay through the rapidly urbanizing Fredericksburg area to the Appalachian Trail.
- 3 The development of the **Fredericksburg – Orange Trail**, a potential rail-trail along the old **Virginia Central Railroad** bed, linking Fredericksburg to Culpeper. With two small sections complete, one in Alum Spring Park maintained by the City of Fredericksburg, and the other linking a school and playing fields in Spotsylvania County, the proposed trail would provide access to Civil War battlefields, historic properties, schools, playgrounds and commercial sites.
- 4 The development of trails linking the **Rapidan Wildlife Management Area** and **Shenandoah National Park** to include a multi-use trail along the **Conway River**.
- 5 The Bull Run Mountains Conservancy manages 800 acres of forest on the southern end of Bull Run Mountains. Because of the proximity to the Washington DC metro area, **the Bull Run Mountain Trail** is heavily used and some rehabilitation work is needed.
- 6 Continue development of trails at the **Laurel Valley Landfill Mountain Bike Park** in Culpeper County.

- 7 Continue development of the **Culpeper Historical Horse Trail**, a loop trail connecting Brandy Station to Kelly's Ford and Stevensburg.
- 8 Develop the **Culpeper Rappahannock Bike and Horse Trail**, roughly 25 miles from Mountain Run in the town of Culpeper to the junction of the Rappahannock River.
- 9 Develop the **Mountain Run Trail** from Davis Street at the Culpeper Train Depot to Germanna College. At Braggs Corner, The Culpeper Trail would join the Salubria Trails to Stevensburg.

Blueways & Water Access

Access to the region's rivers and streams is necessary for meeting water-related recreational demands. Where opportunities are available, lands should be acquired or use agreements arranged to help meet the demand for public access. Where appropriate, portages should be created around dams and other river obstacles. Access considerations for the region include the following:

Beach Access Recommendations

Cooperative agreements among localities and other agencies, as well as private landowners, are encouraged in order to meet the increasing need for public access to beaches and other water-related recreational resources.

- In cooperation with localities, state land management agencies should identify strategies to make additional waterfront resources available for public use.
- Adequate support facilities and services, such as restrooms, concessions, parking and maintenance should be a priority for existing and proposed public water and beach access areas.
- Public agencies need to acquire and/or maintain access to existing public beaches that may be jeopardized by changes in land use or development activities.

Water Trail Recommendations

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.

There is a need for improved visitor services at access points along the following existing water trails:

- 10 **Rappahannock River Water Trail** from confluence with Jordan River to Fredericksburg
- 11 **Hazel River Water Trail** from Monumental Mills to Remington
- 12 **Rapidan River Water Trail** from Route 3 (Germanna Ford) to confluence with the Rappahannock

Water Access Recommendations

Recreational use of waterways varies throughout the region. Boating, fishing, tubing and swimming are popular pastimes, but more public access to waterways is needed.

- A new access site is under development at near the Town of Remington on the Rappahannock River at Rappahannock Station Park, but additional access sites are needed. Private landowners might consider developing access sites with limited facilities for canoes and kayaks. Canoe-in camping, picnicking and shuttle services would be desired amenities during the warmer seasons.

Historic and Landscape Resources

The following are general recommendations for the area's historic resources:

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main

Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.

- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.
- 13 DCR and local governments as desired should support designation for a nationally recognized historic corridor from Monticello in Virginia to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (**Journey Through Hallowed Ground** - www.hallowedground.org) and to provide support after its passed if it is approved by Congress.
 - 14 The National Trust for Historic Preservation owns **Montpelier**, home to three generations of the James Madison family. With more than 2,700 acres of rolling pasturelands, formal gardens and The James Madison Landmark Forest, the site hosts many special events throughout the year, attracting local and regional visitors. A unique site, noted for its historic and natural resources, Montpelier offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy Virginia's beautiful countryside while participating in significant cultural events. Thus, the region is an excellent example of the effectiveness of partnerships established between committed citizens and public agencies or non-profit conservation organizations for the purpose of land preservation.
 - 15 The **John Singleton Mosby Heritage Area**, designated in 1995, was formed to increase awareness of the historic, cultural and natural qualities of this unique area in Northern Virginia. This area, managed by the Mosby Heritage Area Association, encompasses all, or a portion, of the counties of Loudoun, Fauquier, Prince William, Warren, Clarke and Rappahannock in Virginia as well as a portion of Jefferson County, West Virginia. This area, the first Heritage Area in the Commonwealth, has proven to be of significant value to the regional economy and should encourage the designation of similar sites throughout the region. According to data from the Virginia Main Street Program, from July 1996 to July 2002, 12 historic rehabilitation projects were completed in this heritage area, valued at \$7.2 million, generating 112 construction jobs, 102 jobs in other sectors, and \$5.61 million in household earnings.
 - 16 The Brandy Station Foundation is working to develop **Kelly's Ford Battlefield Overlook Park** following the fee simple acquisition Kelly's Ford, an important crossing on the Rappahannock River throughout history, and particularly significant for its role in the Battle of Brandy Station. The Brandy Station Foundation is developing a long-term management plan to develop appropriate recreational use of the 8-acre

property with signage, interpretive displays, and walking paths.

- 17 The Piedmont Environmental Council and Fauquier County Parks and Recreation have received Virginia Land and Water Conservation Funds to help preserve a Civil War Battlefield as part of **Rappahannock Station Park**: This new 26-acre riverfront park will provide public access to the Rappahannock River in Fauquier County. Planned park activities include historic exploration, boating, fishing and wildlife viewing. The Town of Remington, a recently listed site on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, borders the site on the North.

- 18 **Salubria**, located some seven miles east of the town of Culpeper, is thought to be the oldest brick house in Culpeper County. Managed by The Memorial Foundation of The Germanna Colonies In Virginia, _____

- 19 Both **Fodderstack Road and Ben Venue Road** (Route 729) should be nominated for inclusion in a Rural Historic District.

Scenic Resources

The Rappahannock-Rapidan Planning District contains some of the most beautiful areas of the state. The unique scenic quality and sense of place is derived from the rolling hills, farms and forests of the Piedmont framed by the Blue Ridge Mountains. This pastoral character, graced with significant cultural and historic resources, maintains the region's economic vitality as a tourist attraction, and also as an attractive place to live and work.

These qualities have been recognized in the designation of hundreds of miles of roads as Virginia Byways. Each locality should conduct a visual-resource assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process to help protect these resources. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.

Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.

Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.

The following scenic corridors are recognized in Virginia and should receive consideration by local and regional plans for viewshed management. Management of scenic resources is linked to the economic prosperity of the state as it relates to tourism and the overall aesthetic character of the Commonwealth for business, industry and residents. Local governments should encourage landowners, localities and planning district commissions to develop a scenic overlay zone adjacent to and within the viewshed of these corridors as part of a multi-regional viewshed planning process.

- Journey Through Hallowed Ground Corridor

- Appalachian Trail
- Shenandoah National Park (Skyline Drive)

The Skyline Drive (Shenandoah National Park) was recently designated a National Scenic Byway. The Americas Byway Program enables the localities to focus on enhancing the traveling and visitor experience and managing, restoring and preserving scenic or historic roads and allows the locality to apply for funding through the National Scenic Byways Grant Program.

Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical to of attractive and welcoming communities. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection. Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter 7. Following are general and specific recommendations for scenic roads:

- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.

There has also been a tremendous interest in thematic trails including, Civil War trails, the Wilderness Road Trail, the Birding and Wildlife Trails, the Revolutionary War trails, the African-American Heritage Trail system, and other driving tour routes. The next logical step after the Scenic Roads in Virginia map would be to develop a series of regional maps or booklets that describe and help locate the resources and services found in all sections of the state.

The following Roads are existing scenic byways:

Madison County-Route 231

Orange County, Routes 20, 231, 615, 68

Culpeper County, Routes 522, 802

Rappahannock County, Routes 231, 522, 211 and 606

Fauquier County—Routes 651, 806, 616, 667, 660, 687, 802, 670, 678, 17, 738, 688, 647, 691, 628, 626, 991, 702, 709, 710, 712

The following routes are recommended for consideration as Virginia Byways:

20 Route 3/522 South.

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- 21 **Route 230** in Madison and Orange counties..
- 22 **Route 15** in Madison, Fauquier and Culpeper counties.
- 23 **Route 729** in Rappahannock County (both Fodderstack and Ben Venue roads)

Scenic Rivers

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia's Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, bio-diversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. River resources are a critical component for natural resource planning. In this region, there is one designated scenic river segment, The **Rappahannock River** from its headwaters to the bridge on Route 3. In order to more successfully protect river resources the following general and specific recommendations are given.

- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.

- 24 The **Rapidan River** from Germanna Ford to the confluence with the Rappahannock river segments has been evaluated and is qualified for scenic river status.

The following river segments are recommended for evaluation to determine suitability for inclusion into the Virginia Scenic River Program:

- 25 **Rapidan River** from its headwaters to its Germanna Ford.
- 26 **Goose Creek** from its headwaters to the Loudoun County line. That segment of Goose Creek from the Loudoun County line to the Potomac has already been designated a state Scenic River.
- 27 **Hughes River** in Madison, Rappahannock and Culpeper counties.
- 28 **Hazel River** from its headwaters in Rappahannock County to its confluence with the Rappahannock River in Culpeper County.
- 29 **Robinson River** from its headwaters to its confluence with the Rapidan River.
- 30 **Thornton River** in Culpeper County, from Fletcher's Mill to Rt. 729.
- 31 **Rush River** in Rappahannock County.
- 32 **Jordan River** in Rappahannock County.

33 Covington River in Rappahannock County.

34 Piney River in Rappahannock County.

Watershed Resources

This region is within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Most of the area drains to the Rappahannock River. Part of Orange County drains to the James River, and part of Fauquier drains to the Potomac River. Watershed protection groups include Rappahannock Friends and Lovers of Our Watershed (www.RappFLOW.org), Rappahannock County Conservation Alliance and Piedmont Environmental Council. (Waiting on list from Soil and Water District)

General watershed recommendation:

Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans.

35 Continue work on the Upper Thornton River Watershed Project as a model for watershed protection in the region.

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations

More and more both children and adults are losing touch with our environment. Because we generally don't see where food comes from or where waste goes, it is important that federal, state, regional and local agencies educate citizens about human impacts to natural resources and the need for stewardship and conservation. These agencies should work together to promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences to develop an environmentally literate citizenry.

The Bull Run Mountain Conservancy provides educational programs on the ecological, historical, and cultural features of the Bull Run Mountains. The Conservancy works in partnership with local schools to provide experiential learning through field trips, internships, and research opportunities for students.

Environmental Studies at Airlie (a division of the 501(c)(3) non-profit International Academy for Preventive Medicine, Inc.) was established in 1989 as a research, conservation and education organization and conducts internationally recognized research with swans and other waterfowl. The organization also promotes wildlife conservation in the Piedmont region through model conservation and research projects at Clifton Farm. The farm's classroom facilities are also used for field trips and presentations for schools and special interest groups.

Federal Facilities

The **Vint Hill Farms Military Park** is located in Fauquier County. The federal government transferred roughly 14 acres to Fauquier County in the federal lands to parks program.

The **Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park**, the second largest military park in the world, is partially located in Orange County. Of the park's currently owned 7,600 acres, there are 23 miles of trails, 1,100 acres of open fields and 6,500 acres of forest.

The Shenandoah National Park Recommendations

- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites, as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox, and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks, and communities.
- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.

State Facilities

State Parks

The approval of the 2002 General Obligation Bond referendum resulted in funds that benefit the entire state park system. Funds were allocated for new state park acquisitions and for the acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parks, thus providing continued protection of dwindling open space. The bond also provided funding for numerous new facilities, improvements to existing facilities and trails, and for the development of new trails.

In accordance with Code Section 10.1-200.1 - State park master planning, master plans must be developed for new state parks prior to the implementation of any new development. Existing master plans are to be re-evaluated every five years. The master planning process requires public involvement that has been handled in two ways. First, an advisory committee, comprised of local officials, representatives from various user groups, businesses, tourism, adjacent landowners, and others who are stakeholders in the site, is developed to participate through the entire development process of a state park master plan. Second, public meetings are held several times during the process to gain public input and the presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation is open to the public. Any significant change to the plan or additions, the cost of which is in excess of \$500,000, requires public input.

State parks are listed on the Wildlife and Birding Trail. Numerous park sites participate in regional and local initiatives such as trail development and programming.

Specific recommendations for this region follow:

- 36 Sky Meadows State Park (1,862 acres) is located in Fauquier County and situated on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge. Rich in history, the park has rolling pastures and woodlands, scenic vistas and provides a look into a bygone era. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in May 2004, the Mount Bleak House serves as the park's visitor center. The park has a primitive hike-in campground, as well as picnicking, natural and historical interpretive and educational programs. There are over 15 miles of hiking and horseback riding trails. The park also has access to the Appalachian Trail. Efforts should be made to develop creative solutions for solicit interest in operating the horse rental facilities.

Through the 2002 GOB funds, the park will be getting a picnic area with shelters and restroom, and an expansion of the primitive campground. Improvements and enhancements to the trail system will in part be funded by the bond funds.

Opportunities exist to develop trail connections to the adjacent Piedmont Environmental Council owned Ovoka Farm. The park is also adjacent to a section of the Thompson WMA with opportunities to develop connecting trails. With the Appalachian Trail crossing all 3 properties, opportunities should be explored for developing additional loops thus creating a more extensive trail system through this area.

To meet the demand for additional parkland, areas along the Rappahannock and Rapidan River corridors may offer suitable park locations. Other areas should be explored for suitable locations.

Wildlife Management Areas Recommendations

There are a number of wildlife management areas in the region, G. Richard Thompson WMA, C.F. Phelps WMA, Rapidan WMA, Weston WMA. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should continue to investigate opportunities to acquire in-holdings in their wildlife management areas and to improve each area with trails and other structures for wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation. They should also acquire additional lands wherever feasible to provide additional access for public hunting, fishing and other wildlife viewing recreation.

Lake Orange is a 124-acre public fishing lake in Orange County that was impounded in 1964 and opened to fishing in 1967. The lake is located a few miles east of Orange, VA and has a boat ramp, concession, fishing pier, parking lot, picnic facilities and plenty of great shoreline access. **Lake Thompson, Lake Brittle and Lake Phelps** are other

public fishing lakes.

- 37 The **Rapidan Wildlife Management Area** consists of 10,326 acres broken into eight separate tracts distributed along the east slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Madison and Greene Counties. Four of these tracts adjoin Shenandoah National Park and share nearly 25 miles of boundary. An additional 550 acres in Madison County was given to DGIF from the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia. Additional consolidation of this management area in Madison County should be pursued through land exchanges with the Shenandoah National Park and the acquisition of private in-holdings as available. While hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing are the primary uses of the area, other outdoor activities compatible with the wildlife management area include hiking, primitive camping and nature photography. Additional trails are needed linking into Shenandoah National Park.
- 38 Increasing the range of recreational opportunities at **Chester Phelps Wildlife Management Area** by accommodating such activities as horseback riding, primitive canoe-in camping and a river access point at the southern end of the property.

State Forests Recommendations

The following are general recommendations for State Forests in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region:

- The Department of Forestry (DOF) will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.
- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should work with DOF to demonstrate the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

- 39 **Whitney State Forest** is in the process of having a new management plan developed. There are no new trails planned for Whitney as there are actually too many trails at this point. The new management plan will address issues related to a state forest in an urban setting; to include increased use for conservation education and exotic species control.

Natural Areas

Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve is, in part, within the Rappahannock – Rapidan Planning District. The 665-acre Wildcat Mountain Natural Area Preserve in Fauquier County is owned by the Nature Conservancy

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has documented 248 occurrences of 117 rare species and natural communities in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Planning District. Sixteen of these species are globally rare, and four are listed as threatened or endangered.

As of November 2006, there are fifty conservation sites identified within the planning district. Forty (80%) are protected to some degree through ownership and management by state, federal and non-government organizations. However, only XX sites are protected well enough to ensure the long-term viability of the rare species and natural communities they support.

DCR recommends that all unprotected conservation sites, and all unprotected portions of partially protected sites, be targeted for future land conservation efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve. Within the Rappahannock – Rapidan Planning District, DCR is particularly interested in:

- Strengthening protection and management of conservation sites on federal lands
- Protecting rare natural communities such as diabase woodlands, basic oak-hickory forests and low elevation basic outcrop barrens

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR's Natural Heritage staff. For a discussion of the Natural Heritage Program, see page xxx.

Transportation

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints.
(www.vtrans.org)
- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.

Virginia is home to more of the United States Numbered Bicycle Route system than any other state. Since both USBR 1 and USBR 76 cross the state, Virginia hosts about 41 percent of the total USBR system. USBR 1 crosses the state north-south from Arlington to the North Carolina border near Kerr Reservoir, and USBR 76 crosses east-west from Yorktown to the Kentucky border in Dickenson County. These federal routes are officially recognized by AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. These routes are shown on VDOT's official County Maps, and signed in the field.

In addition, Virginia also hosts parts of three other long-distance bicycle routes recognized by Adventure Cycling Association, which is dedicated to establishing a national system of long-distance routes. The Trans-America Bicycle Trail crosses the country from Oregon to Virginia, and shares the same alignment as USBR 76 in Virginia. The Maine to Virginia Bicycle Route runs approximately 150 miles from Washington, D.C. to Virginia, generally along the same alignment as USBR 1, and the Virginia to Florida Bicycle Route covers 130 miles from Richmond to the North Carolina state line at Suffolk.

A number of **on-road bike routes** are used by cycling enthusiasts in Culpeper, Warrenton, and Madison counties. A link to these and other routes as well as bicycle tours in the mountains are available on the Virginia Bike Map, available for download at <http://www.virginiadot.org/bikemap>.

- Adopt and implement the **2006 Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan**
 - Implement the **Culpeper County Bike/Ped Plan**, part of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan (Section 8A)
 - Implement the **2006 Fauquier County Connections Plan**
 - Implement the **Town of Warrenton Greenway & Trails Plan** included in the 2002 Comprehensive Plan
 - Implement the **1999 Town of Culpeper Bikeway Plan**
- 40 USBR 1** in Fauquier County should be enhanced and signage maintained. When road improvements are made, a bike lane should be added, and facilities for bicyclists should be available along the route.

Local & Regional Parks & Recreation Recommendations

Twenty-seven counties in Virginia, including Rappahannock, do not have full time Parks and Recreation Departments, meaning they do not employ a full-time parks and recreation director, (see Map). Sixty-nine Virginia counties have full-time parks and recreation departments, as do 21 incorporated towns, and all cities, except Emporia. These departments serve a vast majority of citizens across the state. While new parks

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and recreation departments are formed occasionally across the state, it is a troubling trend that localities are dropping their parks and recreation departments and turning their programs over to private organizations such as the YMCA. We have seen a substantial reduction in public parks and recreation departments since the last VOP was published. While private organizations may provide recreation programming in the short term, they are not charged with planning for the long term recreation, park and open space needs of a community.

Local Parks & Recreation Programs

All but one of the counties in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region are served by a parks and recreation department. According to the *Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures* (Year Ended June 30, 2005), per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: Culpeper, \$8.45; Fauquier, \$34.29; Madison, \$20.70, Orange, \$40.70; and Rappahannock, \$1.61. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31, including \$85.51 from Towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending on parks and recreation from cities in Virginia.

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs. This is most important in localities where no parks and recreation department exists.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of school-park cooperative agreements could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated

facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.

- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.
- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores.
http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks

Private Sector Recommendations

Great Meadow, located in The Plains, is owned by the Meadow Outdoors Foundation and dedicated to the preservation of open space for horse and field events, Great Meadow provides a unique setting for horse shows, polo matches, wine festivals, cross-country field trials and soccer matches. Drawing more than one million people annually to its 175-acre site, Great Meadow is a popular destination preserved in perpetuity for outdoor events for generations to come.

The **Marriott Ranch** in Fauquier County offers 1-1/2 hour trail rides across a working cattle ranch nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Ranch offers overnight stays, dining, and receptions, with 4,200 acres of activity space & 3,800 square feet of meeting space.

Within the Rappahannock-Rapidan region, other entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the establishment of outfitter services for canoeing and kayaking, boat launches, canoe-in and equestrian campgrounds, multi-field sports complexes and swimming pools. Private landowners might consider fee-based hunting, fishing and boating access. Recreational amenities at wineries and other farms will draw additional visitors to the site and region.

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs. A proposed commercial development at Gyory Farm in Culpeper has a conceptual plan that includes a water park, playing fields and an equestrian center with trails. Both residential and commercial developers should consider how they could likewise help meet the recreational needs of the area. Private investment in playing fields, trails, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools and playgrounds will help meet the demand for these facilities. These might be included as elements of new housing developments.

The following general recommendations are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
 - **Recreational use agreements and/or easements** should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation. Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to spread the word about the **Virginia Landowner Liability Law** to existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation. This law reduces the risk of claims associated with recreational use of private lands, and may be especially applicable for trail and greenway development. This is of particular importance in preserving the locally strong tradition of farm-to-farm trail riding and point-to-point events. Changes in land ownership and subsequent changes in accessibility threaten this tradition.
 - Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support **corporate recognition programs** and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.
 - Bed and breakfast accommodations, as well as hostels, can be developed to accommodate hikers, cyclists and regional tourists participating in local events or traveling through the region.
- 41 Thoroughfare Gap** (between Bull Run and Pond Mountains near Interstate 66) has been suggested as a potential location for a hostel.